

Venice Stakeholders Association

For Immediate Release

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VSA Again Documents Blatant Unequal Enforcement of City of Los Angeles' Park Ordinances

Public Nuisance and "Skid Row" Conditions Plague Venice Beach Recreation Area

(Venice, CA/7-8-14) The Venice Stakeholders Association today released a letter to City officials which again documents that the City of Los Angeles is blatantly engaged in unequal enforcement of city park ordinances, which has resulted in "Skid Row" conditions along Venice Boardwalk and beach park.

The letter, prepared by attorney John Henning for the VSA, shows the pristine condition of City Hall Park, once the site of a large "Occupy LA" encampment, and LAPD Headquarters park, and compares them to the Venice Beach Recreation Area where there is frequent use of banned camping equipment and trash dumps along the Boardwalk. (The VSA previously brought the lack of enforcement of City ordinances to the City's attention in 2012.)

"LA's politicians are enforcing every park law to keep City Hall Park and the LAPD's park safe and attractive," VSA president Mark Ryavec said, "but along Venice Boardwalk, the Department of Recreation and Parks and the LAPD allow campers to violate all the city laws against storing personal property on park land and the use of banned camping equipment." The result is that squatters have taken over the park from residents and visitors, many of whom do not feel safe using the park, the neighborhood leader said.

For example, Henning notes in the letter: "...occupying a sleeping bag or bedroll within a City park *for any purpose* is forbidden by City ordinance. Specifically, the phrase "for any purpose" is unequivocal and strips the ordinance of any requirement that a violator have the specific intent to use the sleeping bag or bedroll for lodging or living accommodation as opposed to recreation."

"Yet Rec. and Parks staff and the LAPD allow the wide use of sleeping bags in the park on a daily basis," Ryavec said.

"These conditions are alarming to residents and clearly having a negative effect on visitors, who frequently complain about being harassed on the Boardwalk and are fearful of bringing small children to the beach in this part of Venice," Ryavec explained.

Henning noted the lack of enforcement has led to a lawless atmosphere in the beach park which last summer resulted in the tragic murder of a young Italian woman by a meth-addicted transient driving illegally on the Boardwalk. "Conditions at Venice Beach have only gotten worse since then," Henning said.

The Henning letter notes that a lawsuit could be brought under the California Civil Code to abate the public nuisance the City is now allowing at Venice Beach. Ryavec said the group is currently raising funds for a public nuisance suit.

Attachment: Letter from John Henning to Mayor Eric Garcetti, et al.

The Venice Stakeholders Association is dedicated to civic improvement. The VSA supports slow growth, protection of the limits of the Venice Specific Plan, neighborhood safety, better traffic circulation, increased parking for residents, neighborhood beautification projects, historic preservation, habitat restoration and protection of coastal waters.

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